

POLLING AND MESSAGING OVERVIEW

Public Safety and Accountability

State-focused solutions to deliver swift and certain justice

Public Safety

Crime is a wedge issue heading into the midterms, and a plurality of Americans believe crime is rising.

What Americans are experiencing:

- **Americans are more likely to think crime is rising than falling.** 38% believe crime is rising, 30% believe it's staying about the same, and just 22% believe crime is falling in the country.
- **Americans have negative views of the criminal justice system as a whole, but view its individual parts more positively.** Americans view first responders (+68), crime prevention programs like mental health resources or job training (+57), and the police (+42) and local police departments (+33) positively despite viewing the criminal justice system negatively (-13).
- **The media plays a large role in perceptions of crime rates.** Among Americans who say they believe crime is rising, 69% say they think that because of news stories about rising crime on TV. Swing voters are slightly less likely than Trump or Harris voters to cite stories about crime on TV as the reason they say crime is rising.

38%

believe that crime is rising in the country.

60%

say that they or someone they know has been the victim of a crime.

The vast majority of Americans feel safe in their own neighborhood and less than one-in-five say crime is affecting their day-to-day lives, but the perception that crime is rising makes the issue more potent.

CAP's Policy Response

Crime does not have to be a vulnerability in elections—but first, leaders must defeat the assumption that they are “fighting to defund the police” and are “soft on crime.” CAP has policies that can restore trust with Americans.

CAP's response:

- **Swift and certain punishment for lawbreakers** by hiring thousands more detectives and leveraging emerging technologies, such as ballistics evidence and DNA extraction, to solve homicides and violent crimes.
- **Ensure swift and certain justice** by hiring more local prosecutors, expanding judicial and public defender positions, and improving case management to clear court backlogs.
- **Stop crime before it starts** by funding youth summer employment programs and community violence intervention programs that help connect individuals to resources, like housing and mental health and substance use treatment.

+16

Net among swing voters who prefer CAP's balanced approach over one focused solely on prevention and rehabilitation rather than police funding.

+3

Messages focused on giving officers tools to keep us safe, fixing the problems that lead to crime, and delivering justice to victims all shift Democratic vote choice by 3 points on average.

The most popular policies were “make sure that people who commit crimes are swiftly prosecuted and held accountable” and “recruit and retain good police officers.”

Political Implications

Republicans retain an advantage on crime issues, but Americans express a serious concern about Trump's approach to crime, and show openness to Democratic public safety policies.

The opportunity:

- **Overall, Americans trust Republicans more than Democrats on issues related to crime and community safety.** Though shrinking, Republicans have a 46% to 39% advantage on trust. Swing voters trust Republicans over Democrats 44% to 25% — though, importantly, 31% are undecided.
- **Americans have reservations about Trump's crime agenda.** More Americans feel less safe (39%) than more safe (26%) due to Trump's approach to crime, and 54% — including 58% of swing voters — worry that Trump is ignoring the rights of Americans in his efforts to address crime.
- **Leaders should offer concrete, policy solutions over abstract goals or slogans.** Americans prefer concrete policy actions over abstract goals such as “fix the problems that lead to crime in the first place,” “hold lawbreakers accountable for crimes,” and “give police officers the tools they need to keep us safe.”

+19

GOP trust advantage among 2024 swing voters to address crime and community safety.

-9

Agreement with deploying the National Guard has flipped and is now underwater compared with polling from 2025.

Leaders need to demonstrate that they are willing to hold people accountable and deliver swift and certain justice. Once Americans feel that their leaders share their values on safety and accountability, it unlocks support for effective crime prevention policies.

CAP Policy Overview

Delivering Accountability: A Plan To Stop Crime in Our Communities

The first job of government is to keep people safe by holding people who commit crime accountable and preventing crime before it occurs. Americans want leaders to acknowledge the serious issue of crime and present concrete, substantive plans on crime.

True safety means empowering communities by equipping local law enforcement with the tools they need while also investing in comprehensive violence prevention solutions.

CAP's targeted crime reduction plan would:

- Hold lawbreakers accountable
- Ensure swift and certain justice
- Deploy focused deterrence strategies
- Fix the problems that lead to crime in the first place

1. Hold Lawbreakers Accountable

Give law enforcement the tools they need to solve crime and keep us safe.

- Too often, crime goes unsolved, leaving victims without justice and offenders undeterred.
- Additional resources can help law enforcement and investigators solve crimes faster, build stronger cases, and prevent retaliation.
- Efforts to prioritize police time along with strong police accountability standards can improve the efficiency and quality of enforcement work.

CAP-proposed state actions:

- Provide police departments with additional resources to recruit and retain the best officers, detectives, and other investigative staff.
- Invest in local jurisdictions' ability to solve crimes faster by funding local crime intelligence tools, including ballistic imaging technology and digital and forensic evidence-processing equipment.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms for state and local law enforcement.

2. Ensure Swift and Certain Justice

Ensure the system operates at the highest level of efficiency to guarantee swift and certain delivery of justice.

- Efficient and fair systems that deliver swift and certain consequences, rather than overly harsh or delayed punishments, are more effective at deterring crime.
- System inefficiency can create court backlogs, leading to delayed punishments for those who commit crime.
- Delayed justice also causes undue delays or burdens for victims of crime and their families.

CAP-proposed state actions:

- Hire more local prosecutors, public defenders, judicial staff, and court personnel.
- Increase funding to modernize technology and improve court case management.
- Allocate resources toward diversion programs and other alternative prosecution models.

3. Deploy Focused Deterrence Strategies

Support police-community public safety partnerships that focus enforcement efforts on the individuals or groups most likely to commit violence.

- The strategy concentrates enforcement, support services, community messaging, and other resources toward individuals exhibiting high-risk behavior.
- Focused deterrence strategies can reduce violence and deliver accountability without increasing arrests.

CAP-proposed state actions:

- Allocate funding to implement or expand focused deterrence strategies.
- Fund community violence intervention service providers to support participants in transforming their lives, including outreach by credible messengers, intensive case management, cognitive behavioral therapy, hospital-based violence intervention resources, and employment services.
- Provide grants for cities to hire additional professional staff to operationalize and sustain focused deterrence strategies, obtain technical assistance, and improve data collection and evaluation.

4. Fix the Underlying Problems That Lead to Crime

Prevent violence by expanding programs that address the root causes of crime and violence by investing in youth programs and locally driven crime prevention strategies.

- Communities that experience the highest rates of crime often lack access to affordable housing, health care, employment opportunities, and clean and green public spaces.
- After-school programs and youth employment programs provide structure to our youth and help them succeed.
- Once someone completes their sentence, ensuring they have a true second chance and the opportunity to become productive citizens makes them less likely to commit crimes again.

CAP-proposed state actions:

- Invest in summer youth employment program, after-school, and early education programs.
- Establish and fund local offices of violence prevention to help coordinate, implement, and support crime prevention strategies.
- Allocate funding to support post-incarceration reentry programs.